St. Thérèse of Lisieux and the Little Way

Holiness Through Ordinary Love

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> *"Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the Kingdom of heaven."*
> **Matthew 18:4 (NABRE)**

In our previous two articles, we explored the profound spiritual wisdom of **St. John of the Cross** and **St. Teresa of Ávila**. St. John taught us that God lovingly purifies the soul through the **Dark Night of the Soul**, removing those attachments that prevent us from loving Him completely. St. Teresa then invited us into the **Interior Castle**, revealing that every human soul is a dwelling place where God desires to live.

These teachings naturally lead us to an important question.

Can ordinary people truly become saints?

Many Christians admire the saints but quietly believe that holiness belongs only to extraordinary individuals. We read about great missionaries, brilliant theologians, heroic martyrs, and mystics who experienced remarkable visions. We look at our own ordinary lives and wonder if sainthood is truly possible for us.

God answered that question through the life of **St. Thérèse of Lisieux**.

Known affectionately as **"The Little Flower,"** St. Thérèse entered the Carmelite convent at the age of fifteen and spent the remainder of her short life in prayer, community life, and humble service. She never traveled on missionary journeys, founded religious communities, or preached before large crowds. She died of tuberculosis at only twenty four years of age.

Yet this quiet young nun became one of the most beloved saints in the Catholic Church and was later proclaimed a **Doctor of the Church**.

How?

Because she discovered a simple yet profound truth.

Holiness is not measured by the greatness of our accomplishments.

Holiness is measured by the greatness of our love.

The Little Way

St. Thérèse called her spiritual path **the Little Way**.

It was not a way of doing less.

It was a way of loving more.

She realized that every ordinary task could become an offering to God when performed with love.

Preparing a meal.

Cleaning a home.

Studying for school.

Working honestly.

Caring for children.

Visiting someone who is sick.

Praying quietly each morning.

Offering a kind word.

Forgiving an old wound.

These ordinary moments become extraordinary when they are offered to God with a sincere heart.

The world often teaches us that greatness is measured by wealth, popularity, influence, or success.

Jesus teaches something very different.

Greatness begins with humility.

As He said,

> *"Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the Kingdom of heaven."*
> **Matthew 18:4 (NABRE)**

St. Thérèse embraced these words with all her heart. She believed that spiritual childhood meant trusting God completely, just as a child trusts a loving parent.

Love Is Measured in Small Things

One of the most beautiful lessons of the Little Way is that love is often expressed through small acts that no one else notices.

A smile offered to someone who is discouraged.

Patience with a difficult coworker.

Listening instead of interrupting.

Helping without expecting recognition.

Praying for someone who has hurt us.

Choosing kindness when we would rather respond with anger.

These hidden sacrifices may appear insignificant to the world, but they are precious in the eyes of God.

St. Thérèse understood that every act of charity, no matter how small, becomes an act of worship when offered to Christ.

Saint Paul reminds us:

> *"If I give away everything I own, and if I hand my body over so that I may boast but do not have love, I gain nothing."*
> **1 Corinthians 13:3 (NABRE)**

Without love, even great accomplishments lose their value.

With love, even the smallest actions become treasures in heaven.

Trusting in God's Mercy

St. Thérèse also taught that holiness does not come from relying upon our own strength.

It comes from trusting completely in God's mercy.

Like a small child reaching for the hand of a loving father, she believed that we should place our complete confidence in Christ.

We all stumble.

We all sin.

We all experience disappointment and weakness.

Yet God never tires of welcoming His children home.

This confidence in God's love allowed St. Thérèse to live with remarkable peace even during illness and suffering.

Her life reminds us that sanctity is not perfection.

It is faithful love.

A Missionary Without Leaving Home

One of the most remarkable aspects of St. Thérèse's life is that she was named **Patroness of the Missions**, even though she never left her Carmelite convent.

How could this be?

She understood that prayer, sacrifice, and love unite us with the entire Church.

Every prayer offered for missionaries.

Every sacrifice offered for sinners.

Every act of love performed in union with Christ strengthens the Body of Christ throughout the world.

She demonstrated that one does not need to travel great distances to participate in the Church's mission.

A faithful Christian living a holy life is already sharing in that mission.

The Celtic Catholic Priest's Reflection

Our world often tells us that we must become famous, powerful, or successful before our lives truly matter.

St. Thérèse of Lisieux teaches exactly the opposite.

God is not looking for celebrities.

He is looking for faithful disciples.

As a Celtic Catholic Priest, I have met many people who believed they had little to offer because they were ordinary. Some were caring for aging parents. Others worked long hours to support their families. Some struggled with illness, grief, addiction, or loneliness. Many wondered whether their quiet lives had any lasting value.

St. Thérèse would answer with a joyful smile.

Every act of love offered to Christ has eternal value.

The mother who comforts her child.

The father who provides faithfully for his family.

The nurse who gently cares for a patient.

The retiree who spends time praying for others.

The friend who offers encouragement.

The Christian who quietly forgives instead of seeking revenge.

These are the hidden flowers that fill God's garden.

Do not underestimate the holiness that can be found in ordinary life.

When ordinary love is united with the extraordinary love of Christ, lives are transformed, families are strengthened, and the Kingdom of God quietly grows.

The Little Way reminds us that every day presents another opportunity to become the saint God created us to be.

> *"Miss no single opportunity of making some small sacrifice, here by a smiling look, there by a kindly word; always doing the smallest right and doing it all for love."*
> **— St. Thérèse of Lisieux**

Unless otherwise noted, all Sacred Scripture quotations are taken from the New American Bible, Revised Edition (NABRE), the English language translation approved for liturgical use by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.